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Author Index

(C) correspondence
(E) editorial
(S38) supplement 38

ACHARYA V. *See* DE P, 375
ADEBOYE KA, *et al*. Cervical sympathetic chain dysfunction after whiplash injury, 378
ADHIYAMAN V, *et al*. Underutilization of antithrombotic therapy in atrial fibrillation, 138
AJITHAKUMARI K. *See* SEAMARK D, 292
ANAGNOSTELIS B. *See* WYATT JC, 244
ANAGNOSTOU E. *See* DIAMANTOPOULOS GI, 430
ANANDAS JA. Hospitalists for the NHS, 661(C)
ANDERSON SR. Implications of the Relenza ruling, 55(E)
ANDERSON SR, JOHNSON CJH. Expedition health and safety: a risk assessment, 557
ANTHONY H, MABERLY J. Multiple chemical sensitivity, 160(C)
ANTHONY H. *See also* EATON K, 338(C)
ANTHONY MY. Roses red and white, 550(C)
ARSCOTT A. *See* DUNN NR, 511
ARTINIAN BL. Age-related distortion, 279(C)
AUSTIN RCT. *See* LOHN JWG, 365
AUSTIN RT. Fibrolipoma of the median nerve, 106(C)
AYRES R. *See* GARSIDE R, 563

BAILEY CM. *See* BREWIS C, 18
BAIN BJ. *See* VALABHJI J, 141
BAIN SC, CHOWDHURY TA. Genetics of diabetic nephropathy and microalbuminuria, 62
BAIRD G. *See* BARON-COHEN S, 521
BAKER D. *See* CROME P, 187
BAKER H. *See* LUYT D, 283
BAKER R. *See* MAINOUS III AG, 504
BALDOTA S, *et al*. Chicken bone injury of the common bile duct, 84
BARLOW G, *et al*. Epstein-Barr virus infection mimicking extrahepatic biliary obstruction, 316
BARNETT N, *et al*. Pulsatile varicose veins, 29
BARON JH. Clinical diagnosis and the function of necropsy, 463
BARON-COHEN S, *et al*. Early identification of autism by the CHecklist for Autism in Toddlers (CHAT), 521
BARRETT AJ, BREEN AC. Adverse effects of spinal manipulation, 258
BASKETT TF. A flux of the reds: evolution of active management of the third stage of labour, 489
BASSI UA. *See* WONG LS, 145
BATES AW. Birth defects described in Elizabethan ballads, 202
BATES D. *See* NODDER D, 219
BAXANDALL R. *See* TYTHERLEIGH-STRONG G, 638
BEALES DL. Politics and policies within the NHS, 487
BEATS B. *See* TRELOAR A, 408
BEATTY S. *See* PATTON N, 80
BEDFORD AF. *See* CHIKWE J, 478
BEGENT RHJ. *See* VERHAAR-LANGEREIS MJ, 75
BEIRNE P, *et al*. Cerebellar syndrome complicating *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* pneumonia, 28
BELLAMY M. *See* VALABHJI J, 141
BENAGIANO G, *et al*. Condom use for preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS: an ethical imperative, 453
BENNETT G. *See* McCREADIE C, 67
BERGER F. Clinical diagnosis and the function of necropsy, 662(C)
BEVERIDGE A. 'Teetering on the verge of complete sanity': Boswell's life of Boswell, 434
BHATTACHARYYA A, *et al*. Evolving electrocardiographic changes in a patient with hyperthyroidism, 589
BLACK D.
Albumin revisited, 553(C)
See also BLACK J, 540
BLACK J, BLACK D. Plague in East Suffolk 1906–1918, 540
BLOOR R. *See* CROME P, 187
BLUMENTHAL I. The gripe water story, 172
BONDESON J. Two historical cases of giant epidermoid cyst of the skull, treated surgically, 597
BONNEY GLW. Placebo, 334(C)
BOOTH JB. Tracheostomy and tracheal intubation in military history, 380
BOTH HV. *See* ROEMER HC, 319
BOWDITCH M. *See* CHIKWE J, 478
BOYLE A. Malign anterior knee pain, 639
BRADMAN K. *See* HU JCC, 432
BRAHMA A, McGHEE CNJ. Surgical correction of refractive errors, 118
BRAHMA A. *See also* McGHEE C, 333(C)
BRAND PLP. Bronchodilators in cystic fibrosis, 37(S38)
BRANDNER S. *See* MOOSMANN P, 25
BRATMAN RL. A national database of medical error, 106(C)
BRAZIL EV, COATS TJ. Sonoclot coagulation analysis of *in-vitro* haemodilution with resuscitation solutions, 507
BREACH C. *See* BALDOTA S, 84
BREEN AC. *See* BARRETT AJ, 258
BREWIS C, *et al*. Investigation and treatment of thyroglossal cysts in children, 18
BRIERLY RD, STRACHAN CJL. Two aorto-iliac bypass graft infections associated with appendicitis, 78
BRUNTON AT. *See* LEVINE D, 428
BURGESS NA. *See* CHITALE SV, 482
BURN G. *See* SEAMARK D, 292
BURNS A. *See* MINTZER J, 457
BURNSTEIN R. Replacement of damaged neural cells, 52(C)
BUSUTTIL A. *See* SIMPSON MA, 646
BUXTON N, McCONACHIE NS. Amphetamine abuse and intracranial haemorrhage, 472
BYRON M, DIEPPE P. Educating health professionals about disability: 'attitudes, attitudes, attitudes', 397(E)

CAHILL JD. Malaria with a positive 'monospot' test, 336(C)
CALDER I, *et al*. John Logie Baird—fibreoptic pioneer, 438
CALDER N. *See* CALDER I, 438
CALNAN M. *See* MILEWA T, 3
CAMPBELL F. *See* UTTING MR, 247
CAMPBELL-TIECH A. Why doctors get so cross in Crown Courts, 387
CANNING DM. Unanswered questions about NICE, 54(C)
CARBALLO M. *See* GUHA-SAPIR D, 59
CARMICHAEL JHE. How do GPs respond to reports of abnormal chest X-rays?, 159(C)
CARR SB, McBRATNEY J. The role of vitamins in cystic fibrosis, 14(S38)
CASEY JL. *See* VERHAAR-LANGEREIS MJ, 75
CEMBROWICZ S. A national database of medical error, 215(C)
CHALMERS I. It's official: evaluative research must become part of routine care in the NHS, 555(E)
CHAMBERS TL. Seven questions about paediatric research, 320
CHANARIN I. Causes of impaired fetal growth, 159(C)
CHAPPEL D. *See* FISCHBACHER C, 356
CHAPPELL B. *See* NODDER D, 219
CHARLTON R. Emergency management of meningitis, 450(C)
CHARMAN T. *See* BARON-COHEN S, 521
CHENG TO. Pulsating veins, 213(C)
CHIKWE J, *et al*. Sleeping with the enemy: *Pasteurella multocida* infection of a hip replacement, 478
CHIN B, LIP GYH. Antithrombotic therapy in atrial fibrillation, 278(C)
CHISHOLM EM. *See* COWAN ML, 536
CHISSELL H. *See* KOTAK BP, 143
CHITALE SV, *et al*. Pericalyceal haemangioma and papillary necrosis, 482
CHOKSEY MS. *See* TROTTER MI, 479
CHOUDHURY RP. *See* BEIRNE P, 28
CHOWDHURY TA. *See* BAIN SC, 62

CHOYCE DP. Surgical correction of refractive error, 274(C)
CHURCH JCT. *See* COURTENAY M, 72
CLARK SK. *See* COWAN ML, 536
CLATWORTHY MR, *et al*. Haemothorax via an intact diaphragm, 634
COATS TJ. *See* BRAZIL EV, 507
COHEN B. Intracranial hypertension, 216(C)
COLLYER TC. *See* BARNETT N, 29
COLOVER J. Experimental allergic encephalomyelitis and multiple sclerosis, 551(C)
CONWAY JS. Placebo and placebo effects in medicine, 53(C)
COOK GC. The cause and prevention of puerperal sepsis, 280(C)
COOPER CC. *See* ROWE RE, 22
COSTELLO D, *et al*. Extrarectal mass: a tailgut cyst, 85
COSTELLO D. *See also* THEODOROU NA, 499(C)
COURTENAY M, *et al*. Larva therapy in wound management, 72
COWAN ML, *et al*. Surgical management of *Mycobacterium avium intracellulare* infection in children, 536
COWELL C. Accountability, clinical governance and the acceptance of imperfection, 214(C)
COWIE V. *See* GABBAY MB, 114
COX A. *See* BARON-COHEN S, 521
CRAMMER JL. Insulin coma therapy for schizophrenia, 332(C)
CROFT PR. *See* SILMAN AJ, 135
CROME P, *et al*. Domiciliary visits to the old and the mentally ill: how valuable?, 187

DAHLMANN A. Pain management in herpes zoster ophthalmicus, 334(C)
DARZI A. *See* BALDOTA S, 84; SEBIRE NJ, 192
DATE A. Tyger tyger, 160(C)
DAVID TJ. *See* PENDLETON DA, 9(S38)
DAVIES F. The future of paediatric accident and emergency medicine, 484
DAVIES JE. *See* SRINIVASAN V, 81
DAVIES MB, *et al*. A multiple-sclerosis-like syndrome associated with glue-sniffing, 313
DAVIES W. *See* VALABHJI J, 141
DAVIS JA.
Do infections prevent asthma?, 52(C)
Paediatric research, 448(C)
DAWBER RP. *See* GEE BC, 661
DAWOOD R. Tyger tyger, 279(C)
DAWSON PM. *See* RIAZ AA, 261
DE P, *et al*. Symptomless hypercalcaemia: are you sure it's primary hyperparathyroidism?, 375
DEALE A, WESSELY S. Diagnosis of psychiatric disorder in clinical evaluation of chronic fatigue syndrome, 310
DEAN ME. Placebo and placebo effects in medicine, 53(C)
DENNIS S, *et al*. Abdominal actinomycosis presenting as psoas abscess, 195
DHAMI S. *See* SHEIKH A, 161(C)
DIAMANTOPOULOS GI, *et al*. Pancreatic tumour with jaundice: good prognosis, 430
DICKSON GH. How long is full-time?, 553(C)
DIEPPE P.
To cure or not to cure, that is *not* the question, 611
See also BYRON M, 397(E)
DIREKZE NC, *et al*. Wriggling muscles as a sign of lung carcinoma, 373
DOBBS F. *See* RANDALL C, 305
DODD ME, WEBB AK. Understanding non-compliance with treatment in adults with cystic fibrosis, 2(S38)
DODD ME. *See also* VERMA A, 20(S38)
DOEHRING P. *See* BARON-COHEN S, 521
DORNAN TL. *See* BHATTACHARYYA A, 589; UTTING MR, 247
DRAKE DP. *See* BREWIS C, 18
DREW A. *See* BARON-COHEN S, 521
DRURY NE. Beauty is only skin deep, 89
DUNBAR H. *See* LUYT D, 283
DUNN NR, *et al*. Costs of seeking ethics approval before and after the introduction of multicentre research ethics committees, 511

EAGLE KF. *See* VERHAAR-LANGEREIS MJ, 75
EATON K, ANTHONY H. Bias in peer review, 338(C)
EDWARDS PD. *See* CLATWORTHY MR, 634
EDWARDS R. *See* FISCHBACHER C, 356
EL HOUCHEIMI B. *See* BALDOTA S, 84
ELLIS SJ.
Ethics committees, 107(C)
See also DAVIES MB, 313
EMERTON DG. *See* ADEBOYE KA, 378
ENGENHART-CABILLIC R. *See* KOLLER M, 621
ERNST E. *See* RESCH KI, 164
EVANS M. So you want to write a textbook?, 276(C)
EXON DJ. *See* HARRIS KP, 196

FALIAKOU EC. *See* HARRIS KP, 196
FARMER CKT. *See* GOLDSMITH DJA, 377
FARTHING A. *See* SEBIRE NJ, 192
FERRIE R, LOVELAND RC. Bilateral gluteal compartment syndrome after 'ecstasy' hyperpyrexia, 260
FINK C. *See* GOON P, 191
FIRMIN RK. *See* WORWAG S, 77
FISCHBACHER C, *et al*. Health surveys via the Internet: quick and dirty or rapid and robust?, 356
FOELLMANN W. *See* ROEMER HC, 319
FOWLER PBS.
Parkinsonism secondary to carbon monoxide poisoning, 53(C)
The health of the Cornish tin miner, 159(C)
FOX R.
John Swales—obituary, 610
Medicine in the millennium, 37
Of knowledge and deception, 163(E)
FOX R, HINE D. Health improvement and the RSM, 111
FRAUCHIGER B. *See* MOOSMANN P, 25
FREEMAN J. *See* NODDER D, 219
FRY DR. Non-senile squalor, 107(C)

GABBAY MB, *et al*. Too ill to learn: double jeopardy in education for sick children, 114
GANGULI S. *See* KHUNTI K, 183
GARDNER G. The most pressing issue?, 337(C)
GARRALDA ME. *See* RANGEL L, 129
GARROW J. *See* RESCH KI, 164
GARSIDE R, *et al*. General practitioners' attitudes to sexual activity in under-sixteens, 563
GEE BC, DAWBER RP. Hidradenitis suppurativa, 661(C)
GIBBS D.
Drawings of changes in scrofulous glands by Frederick Treves, 550(C)
Galen of Pergamon (129–c200) overlooking Burlington Gardens, 607
GIBBS PJ. *See* MUSTAFA MR, 26
GIBBY OM. *See* DE P, 375
GILKES MJ. Surgical correction of refractive error, 274(C)
GILLAMS AR. *See* TAYLOR I, 576
GILLARD JH. Systemic lupus with aneurysms, 160(C)
GILLESPIE ND. Parkinsonism secondary to carbon monoxide poisoning, 53(C)
GILSTON A. Clinical examination of the respiratory system, 158(C)
GILTHORPE MS. *See* McCREADIE C, 67
GIORDANO P. *See* MELIKIAN N, 538
GLIEKMAN S. Accountability, clinical governance and the acceptance of imperfection, 214(C)
GOLDBERG D. Predictions for psychiatry, 649
GOLDEN RL. Sir William Osler—*Abroad with Jane*, 93
GOLDIN RD. *See* SEBIRE NJ, 192
GOLDSMITH DJA, FARMER CKT. Autonomic neuropathy with B-cell lymphoma, 377
GOLKA K. *See* ROEMER HC, 319
GOODMAN M. The sin of Onan, 159(C)
GOODMAN NW. Accountability, clinical governance and the acceptance of imperfection, 56
GOON P, *et al*. Ophthalmic zoster sine herpete, 191
GORDON IJ, *et al*. The first successful haemodialysis, 266
GORDON PH. So you want to write a textbook?, 150
GOVAN JRW. Infection control in cystic fibrosis: methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and the *Burkholderia cepacia* complex, 40(S38)

GRANSDEN W. *See* MELZER M, 641
GRANT JW. *See* CLATWORTHY MR, 634
GRAY GR. *See* OCKRIM J, 480
GREEN ST. *See* BARLOW G, 316
GRIFFIN JP. Bubonic plague in biblical times, 449(C)
GRUNDY HC. *See* COWAN ML, 536
GUIHA-SAPIR D, CARBALLO M. Medical relief in earthquakes, 59
GUI GPH. *See* HARRIS KP, 196

HADDO O. *See* KOTAK BP, 143
HADJIMINAS DJ. *See* BALDOTA S, 84
HAINES L. *See* NICOLL A, 580
HAJIOFF S, McKEE M. The 'I Love You' virus and its implications for genodiversity, 398(E)
HANDLEY GH. *See* SAEED BO, 314
HAQ N. *See* DAVIES MB, 313
HARDY KJ. *See* McNULTY SJ, 429
HARRIS KP, *et al*. Isolated sarcoidosis of the breast, 196
HART JT. Clinical judgement, 605(C)
HATCH J. *See* NODDER D, 219
HAWORTH CS. *See* VERMA A, 20(S38)
HENDERSON JR. Mrs Starling's leg, 384
HERSANT M. *See* LEVINE D, 428
HEYDERMAN RS, KLEIN NJ. Emergency management of meningitis, 225
HIGGINSON IJ. The quality of expectation: healing, palliation or disappointment, 609(E)
HINDLE KS, *et al*. A puzzle: where was the airgun pellet?, 500(C)
HINE D. *See* FOX R, 111
HOLDCROFT A. *See* LUCAS DN, 346
HOLLAND BK. Treatments for bubonic plague: reports from seventeenth century British epidemics, 322
HOLLMAN A. Venous pulsation in the orbit, 335(C)
HOLT RIG, *et al*. Acromegaly, primary thyrotoxicosis, a dense left hemiparesis and a right internal carotid aneurysm, 636
HORROBIN DF. Innovation in the pharmaceutical industry, 341
HOUGHTON G. *See* McCREADIE C, 67
HOUSDEN P. *See* MANN CJ, 144
HOWARD MR. Red jackets and red noses: alcohol and the British Napoleonic soldier, 38
HOWITT WILSON MB. The most pressing issue, 213(C)
HOWLIN P. Autism and intellectual disability: diagnostic and treatment issues, 351
HU JCC, *et al*. Pancreaticoduodenectomy after downstaging of pancreatic carcinoma by chemotherapy, 432
HUANG A.
Small-bowel obstruction after blunt trauma, 498(C)
See also HINDLE KS, 500(C)
HUGHES T. *See* ADEBOYE KA, 378
HUTTON C. *See* RANDALL C, 305
HYDE ID. *See* MANN CJ, 144

IBRAHIM M. *See* ST KRASOPOULOS G, 83
IQBAL M. *See* KOTAK BP, 143
IRVINE LM. *See* WHITTEN M, 6
IRWIN M. Living wills, 395(C)
ISMAIL T. *See* WONG LS, 145

JACOBS B. Biblical origins of placebo, 213(C)
JACOBS M. Imported fever: a survival guide, 124
JANOWITZ HD. Sleep disorders in the Macbeths, 87
JARRETT F. Differential diagnosis of varicose veins, 279(C)
JAY V. This month in history, 54, 108, 162, 216, 280, 338(C), 396, 450, 500
JAYSON MIV. *See* SILMAN AJ, 135
JEER P. *See* MANN CJ, 144
JESSIMAN I. Living wills, 499(C)
JOASHI U. *See* MELZER M, 641
JOHNSON CJH. *See* ANDERSON SR, 557
JOHNSTON D. *See* VALABHJI J, 141
JOHNSTON DG. *See* KEARNEY T, 15
JOLOBE OMP.
Clinical examination of the respiratory system, 158(C)
Keeping up by teaching, 499(C)
JONES B. *See* VOHRA HA, 594
JONES K. Insulin coma therapy in schizophrenia, 147
JORDENS CFC. *See* LITTLE M, 501(E)
JORY W. Surgical correction of refractive error, 274(C)

KAMALAKANNAN D. *See* ADHIYAMAN V, 138
KAPIRIS SA. *See* DIAMANTOPOULOS GI, 430
KAPLAN R. Medicine at the Battle of Stalingrad, 97
KARCH S. The wrong message?, 339(E)
KAUSAR SA. Antithrombotic therapy in atrial fibrillation, 277(C)
KAUSHAL K. *See* BHATTACHARYYA A, 589
KAY NRM. Educating health professionals about disability, 606(C)
KEARNEY T, *et al*. Isolated corticotropin deficiency in chronic alcoholism, 15
KEEN J. *See* NODDER D, 219
KEEP PA. *See* VERHAAR-LANGEREIS MJ, 75
KEIL A. *See* KOLLER M, 621
KERR B. *See* GABBAY MB, 114
KERR DJ. *See* NICUM S, 416; YOUNG A, 10
KETTLEWELL S. *See* OCKRIM J, 480
KEYNES M. A Harley Street address, 108(C)
KHUNTI K, GANGULI S. Who looks after people with diabetes: primary or secondary care?, 183
KIDNER N. *See* WALSH S, 336(C)
KILBY J. A national database of medical error, 215(C)
KILDING R. *See* BARLOW G, 316
KING A, MIGDAL C. Clinical management of glaucoma, 175
KINSELLA SM. *See* LUCAS DN, 346
KLEIN NJ. *See* HEYDERMAN RS, 225
KLEINLE S. *See* MOOSMANN P, 25
KNOWLES M. The most pressing issue, 213(C)
KOLLER M, *et al*. Expectations and quality of life of cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy, 621
KOSHY R. *See* SEAMARK D, 292
KOTAK BP, *et al*. Bilateral scapular fractures after electrocution, 143
KRUGER A. *See* LEVINE D, 428
KUNST H. *See* MADDEN B, 592

LAING C, *et al*. Headache, hypertension and Horner's syndrome, 535
LANDRA A. The sin of Onan, 275(C)
LANE N. Medical constraints on the quantum mind, 571
LANE TM. Small-bowel obstruction after blunt trauma, 498(C)
LAVERY WL. How relevant are animal models to human ageing?, 296
LEGG NJ. *Grand mal* in hypotension, 498(C)
LESLIE M. *See* HU JCC, 432
LEVIN M. *See* RANGEL L, 129
LEVINE D, *et al*. Recurrent sulphaemoglobinaemia treated with neomycin, 428
LEWIS D. *See* TUBRIDY N, 374
LIP GYH. *See* CHIN B, 278(C)
LITTLE M, *et al*. On surviving cancer, 501(E)
LIVINGSTON M. Whiplash injury: why are we achieving so little?, 526
LLOYD IC. *See* PATTON N, 80
LOBO DN. *See* THEKKUDAN J, 262
LOEFLER IJP. Female beauty, 334(C)
LOHN JWG, *et al*. Unusual causes of small-bowel obstruction, 365
LORENZ W. *See* KOLLER M, 621
LOUDON I. The cause and prevention of puerperal sepsis, 394(C)
LOVELAND RC. *See* FERRIE R, 260
LOWTHIAN P. The limits of pressure sore prevention, 107(C)
LUCAS DN, *et al*. Urgency of caesarean section: a new classification, 346
LUNNISS PJ. *See* MORTIMER PS, 420
LUYT D, *et al*. Nut allergy in children: investigation and management, 283
LUYT D. *See also* WORWAG S, 77
LYNN R. *See* NICOLL A, 580

MABERLY J. *See* ANTHONY H, 160(C)
MACANOVIC M, PEAT D. Minimal change nephropathy with adenocarcinoma of breast, 539

McBRATNEY J. *See* CARR SB, 14(S38)
MACKAY AD. *See* SAM WIC, 318
McCONACHIE NS. *See* BUIXTON N, 472
McCREADIE C, *et al.* Elder abuse: do general practitioners know or care?, 67
McDONALD SW. Professor Jeffray's grand tour, 42
McGHEE C, BRAHMA A. Surgical correction of refractive error, 333(C)
McGHEE CNJ. *See* BRAHMA A, 118
McGRAW ME. Goodbye to presenteeism, 281(E)
McKEE M, MOSSIALOS E. Seattle, the World Trade Organization and the NHS, 109(E)
McKEE M. *See also* HAJIOFF S, 398(E)
McMULLAN JJ.
Educating health professionals about disability, 606(C)
Management of acute bursitis, 54(C)
McNULTY SJ, HARDY KJ. Two patients with acute intermittent porphyria treated with nafarelin to prevent menstrual exacerbations, 429
MADAAN S. *See* RIAZ AA, 261
MADDEN B, *et al.* Sucking noise and collapse after central venous catheter removal, 592
MAHADEVAN M. *See* BREWIS C, 18
MAINOUS III AG, *et al.* Hospitalists for the NHS?, 504
MAJUMDAR A, WHEELER DC. Lipid abnormalities in renal disease, 178
MALHAM A. *See* CROME P, 187
MANN CJ, *et al.* Combined Galeazzi and Monteggia forearm fracture, 144
MANN RD. *See* DUNN NR, 511
MARLEY N. *See* DENNIS S, 195
MARX T, *et al.* Xenon anaesthesia, 513
MATHIAS CJ. *See* LAING C, 535
MAY AE. *See* LUCAS DN, 346
MAYNARD RL. Air pollution—better or worse?, 288
MELIKIAN N, GIORDANO P. Tuberous sclerosis—could it be?, 538
MELZER M, *et al.* Group A streptococcal meningitis with an infected BCG scar, 641
MENDELSON G. Placebo analgesia, 449(C)
MENON DJ. *See* CLATWORTHY MR, 634
MICHELL AR.
Comparative medicine of senescence, 448(C)
Hypertension in dogs: the value of comparative medicine, 451(E)
MIDGLEY R. *See* NICUM S, 416
MIGDAL C. *See* KING A, 175
MIKELSONS C. *See* PRASAD SA, 27(S38)
MILES J, *et al.* Slimming on the Internet, 254
MILEWA T, CALNAN M. Primary care and public involvement: achieving a balanced partnership, 3
MINTZER J, BURNS A. Anticholinergic side-effects of drugs in elderly people, 457
MONTEIRO J. *See* CLATWORTHY MR, 634
MOOSMANN P, *et al.* Hyperventilation due to mitochondrial myopathy, 25
MORGAN WKC. Air pollution and death, 550(C)
MORRIS HL. Surgical treatment for hidradenitis suppurativa, 606(C)
MORRIS NA. *See* SAEED BO, 314
MORTIMER PS, LUNNISS PJ. Hidradenitis suppurativa, 420
MOSSIALOS E. *See* McKEE M, 109(E)
MULLA H. *See* WORWAG S, 77
MURDOCH I. *See* MELZER M, 641
MURT''ZA B. *See* BALDOTA S, 84
MUSTAFA MR, *et al.* Cadaveric renal transplantation with simultaneous iliac bypass, 26

NAGAI T. Acute myocardial infarction without raised creatine kinase activity, 315
NASH G. Heparin for colorectal cancer, 554(C)
NASIRI N. *See* HARRIS KP, 196
NEWMAN L. Continuing legacy of the Third Reich, 551(C)
NICHOLS P. *See* DENNIS S, 195
NICOLL A, *et al.* Public health outputs from the British Paediatric Surveillance Unit and similar clinician-based systems, 580
NICUM S, *et al.* Chemotherapy for colorectal cancer, 416
NIES C. *See* KOLLER M, 621
NODDER D, *et al.* Multiple sclerosis: care needs for 2000 and beyond, 219
NORTON RN. Tracheostomy in war, 607(C)

O'BRIEN G. Behavioural phenotypes, 618
OCKRIM J, *et al.* Lemierre's syndrome, 480
OHRY A. The emperor with the shaking head, 550(C)
OKE A. *See* ADHIYAMAN V, 138
OOMMEN T. Larva therapy, 394(C)
OSBORN M. *See* SEBIRE NJ, 192
OVASSAPIAN A. *See* CALDER I, 438
OWEN MR. *See* GARSIDE R, 563

PAPAGEORGIOU AC. *See* SILMAN AJ, 135
PARKER MC. *See* HU JCC, 432
PARKER SG. *See* MAINOUS III AG, 504
PARKINSON J. Innovation in the pharmaceutical industry, 606(C)
PARUCHURU P. *See* MADDEN B, 592
PATEL H. *See* HINDLE KS, 500(C)
PATERSON JK. A voice for the National Health Service, 395(C)
PATTON N, *et al.* Bilateral sixth and fourth cranial nerve palsies in idiopathic intracranial hypertension, 80
PAUL K. *See* LITTLE M, 501(E)
PAYNE CE. Hereditary Madelung's disease, 194
PEARCE JMS. The emperor with the shaking head, 335(C)
PEARSON VH. *See* GARSIDE R, 563
PEAT D. *See* MACANOVIC M, 539
PENDLETON DA, DAVID TJ. The compliance conundrum in cystic fibrosis, 9(S38)
PENNEY MD. *See* DE P, 375
PERKIN GD. Cerebral venous thrombosis: medical therapy, 238
PETRIE C. *See* MILES J, 254
PHILIPP EE. Ancient records of birth defects, 336(C)
PHILPOT M. *See* TRELOAR A, 408
PIPITONE N. *See* PITZALIS C, 412
PITT J. *See* RIAZ AA, 261
PITZALIS C, PIPITONE N. Psoriatic arthritis, 412
PODOLL K, ROBINSON D. Migraine experiences as artistic inspiration in a contemporary artist, 263
PORTER A. Why doctors get cross in Crown Courts, 499(C)
POTTS M. The most pressing issue, 1(E)
POWLSON M. Red jackets and red noses, 214(C)
POWRIE JK. *See* HOLT RIG, 636
PRASAD SA, *et al.* Physiotherapy in cystic fibrosis, 27(S38)
PRICE JM, ROSENBERG ES. The silicone gel breast implant controversy: the rise of expert panels and the fall of junk science, 31
PRINGLE RG.
So you want to write a textbook?, 276(C)
Was it a Galeazzi?, 394(C)
PURDY B. *See* GABBAY MB, 114

RAHI J. *See* NICOLL A, 580
RANDALL C, *et al.* Randomized controlled trial of nettle sting for treatment of base-of-thumb pain, 305
RANDALL H. *See* RANDALL C, 305
RANGEL L, *et al.* The course of severe chronic fatigue syndrome in childhood, 129
RAYNER C. *See* UTTING MR, 247
REECE-SMITH H. *See* THOMAS S, 275(C)
REHMAN HU. Primary angiitis of the central nervous system, 586
REINELT H. *See* MARX T, 513
RENOWDEN S. Cerebral venous thrombosis: local thrombolysis, 241
RESCH KI, *et al.* A randomized controlled study of reviewer bias against an unconventional therapy, 164
REZZA G. *See* BENAGIANO G, 453
RIAZ AA, *et al.* Restorative proctocolectomy for collagenous colitis, 261
RICE JE. The emperorr with the shaking head: Claudius' movement disorder, 198
RICHARDSON P. So you want to write a textbook?, 276(C)
RIVETT G. Contemporary medical history—help wanted, 662
ROBERTS FP. The sin of Onan, 275(C)
ROBERTS H. *See* RANGEL L, 129
ROBINSON D. *See* PODOLL K, 263

ROBINSON PN. *See* LUCAS DN, 346
ROBINSON S. *See* KEARNEY T, 15; *See* VALABHJI J, 141
ROEMER HC, *et al*. Angel's trumpet and the eye, 319
ROHDE P. Age-related distortion, 35
ROIZEN J. *See* GARSIDE R, 563
ROSENBERG ES. *See* PRICE JM, 31
ROWE RE, COOPER CC. Osteoporosis services in secondary care: a UK survey, 22
ROWLANDS D. *See* WONG LS, 145
RUSBY J. *See* WONG LS, 145
RUSSELL WMS. Plague, rats and the Bible, 553(C)
RYAN TJ. *See* COURTENAY M, 72

SAFED BO, *et al*. Alimentary hyperglycaemia mistaken for diabetes mellitus, 314
SAM WIC, MACKAY AD. Salmonella meningitis and a green iguana, 318
SAMS VR. *See* CHITALE SV, 482
SANDERS H. *See* RANDALL C, 305
SARASWATHI DEVI P. *See* SEAMARK D, 292
SAVAGE A. The struck-off mystery, 106(C)
SAYERS E-J. *See* LITTLE M, 501(E)
SCHIRMER U. *See* MARX T, 513
SCHMIDT M. *See* MARX T, 513
SCHOFIELD A. *See* COSTELLO D, 85
SCHON F. *See* TUBRIDY N, 374
SCHRAIBMAN IG. Edward VII's appendix, 499(C)
SCHWARTZ MS. *See* DIREKZE NC, 373
SCOTT DJA. *See* BARNETT N, 29
SEAMARK C. *See* SEAMARK D, 292
SEAMARK D, *et al*. Palliative care in India, 292
SEBIRE NJ, *et al*. Appendiceal adenocarcinoma with ovarian metastases in the third trimester of pregnancy, 192
SELLEN DW, TEDSTONE A. Nutritional needs of refugee children in the UK, 360
SENAPATI A. *See* DENNIS S, 195
SERVICE A. An NHS Staff College?, 448(C)
SHAH IU. *See* ADHIYAMAN V, 138
SHARMA OP. Sir Frederick Treves (1853–1923) and his *Drawings of Changes in Scrofulous Glands*, 340(E)
SHARMA RA. Cancer chemoprevention: a clinical reality, 518
SHEIKH A, DHAMI S. Attitudes to organ donation among South Asians in the UK, 161(C)
SHER L. The placebo effect and endogenous opioids, 158(C)
SHERWOOD JONES E. *See* GORDON IJ, 266
SILMAN AJ, *et al*. Hospital referrals for low back pain: more coherence needed, 135
SIMPSON MA, *et al*. The case of Jane Anderson, Portobello, 1889–1914, 646
SKINNER A. The sin of Onan, 275(C)
SMITH AE. *See* CROME P, 187
SMITH D. The National Health Service needs a voice of its own, 217(E)
SMYTHIES J. Insulin coma therapy for schizophrenia, 449(C)
SOMERVILLE J. *See* BEIRNE P, 28
SÖNKSEN PH. *See* HOLT RIG, 636
SOTHERAN W. *See* THOMAS R, 215(C)
SPARK JI. *See* BARNETT N, 29
SPILIADI CH. *See* DIAMANTOPOULOS GI, 430
SQUIRES TJ. *See* SIMPSON MA, 646
SRINIVASAN V, DAVIES JE. Snoring with sleep apnoea: deceptive appearances, 81
ST KRASOPOULOS G, *et al*. Sclerosing mediastinitis with aortic valve regurgitation and aortic root dilation, 83
STEEL M. *See* MILES J, 254
STEPHENSON JBP. 'Grand mal' in hypotension, 276(C)
STEVENSON VL. *See* DIREKZE NC, 373
STIRLING R. *See* COSTELLO D, 85
STIRLING RW. *See* RIAZ AA, 261
STRACHAN CJL. *See* BRIERLY RD, 78
SULLIVAN R. Direct-to-consumer advertising: the future in Europe, 400
SUMMERTON N. *See* FISCHBACHER C, 356
SWALES J. The troublesome search for evidence: three cultures in need of integration, 402
SWAN IRC. Is early management of acoustic neuroma important?, 614
SWEETMAN B. Whiplash: a double injury, 662(C)
SWEETMAN BJ. Chronic fatigue syndrome in mother and child, 337(C)
SWETTENHAM J. *See* BARON-COHEN S, 521

TANNENBAUM E-L. *See* PRASAD SA, 27(S38)
TAYLOR I, GILLAMS AR. Colorectal liver metastases: alternatives to resection, 576
TAYLOR M. *See* HU JCC, 432
TAYLOR P. *See* BEIRNE P, 28
TEASDALE E. Cerebral venous thrombosis: making the most of imaging, 234
TEDSTONE A. *See* SELLEN DW, 360
THEKKUDAN J, *et al*. Groin sepsis after hip replacement: look beyond the hip, 262
THEMEN A. *See* THOMAS S, 275(C)
THEODOROU N. *See* COSTELLO D, 85
THEODOROU NA, COSTELLO D. Tailgut cyst, 499(C)
THOMAS DJ. *See* LAING C, 535
THOMAS R, SOTHERAN W. Postmortem and perimortem caesarean section, 215(C)
THOMAS S, *et al*. Modified approach to tailgut cyst excision, 275(C)
THOMAS S. *See also* NODDER D, 219
TINKER A. *See* McCREADIE C, 67
TRELOAR A, *et al*. A pill in the sandwich: covert medication in food and drink, 408
TROTT D. *See* KOLLER M, 621
TROTTER MI, CHOKSEY MS. Facial pain with intracranial aneurysm, 479
TUBRIDY N, *et al*. Unsuccessful treatment with cidofovir and cytarabine in progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy associated with dermatomyositis, 374
TYRER P. Age-related distortion, 279(C)
TYTHERLEIGH-STRONG G, *et al*. Rupture of the ankle extensor retinaculum in a dancer, 638

UBHI CS. *See* THEKKUDAN J, 262
UNWIN A. *See* TYTHERLEIGH-STRONG G, 638
UNWIN RJ. *See* LAING C, 535
UTTING MR, *et al*. Consultation skills of medical students before and after changes in curriculum, 247

VALABHJI J, *et al*. Unexplained loss of consciousness: systemic mastocytosis, 141
VALMAN B. A coat of arms for paediatrics and child health, 389
VAN GIJN J. Cerebral venous thrombosis: pathogenesis, presentation and prognosis, 230
VAN NOORDWIJK J. *See* GORDON IJ, 266
VELLA S. *See* BENAGIANO G, 453
VENN G. *See* ST KRASOPOULOS G, 83
VERHAAR-LANGEREIS MJ, *et al*. Anaphylactic reaction to radioimmunotherapy despite plasmapheresis to remove anti-mouse antibodies, 75
VERITY C. *See* NICOLL A, 580
VERMA A, *et al*. Holidays and cystic fibrosis, 20(S38)
VILLAR RN. *See* CHIKWE J, 478
VOHRA HA, JONES B. Femoral vein obstruction with an arthritic hip, 594

WAGNER K. *See* KOLLER M, 621
WALSH S, KIDNER N. Pulled elbow, 336(C)
WATKINSON A. So you want to write a textbook?, 276(C)
WEATHERBY SJM. *See* DAVIES MB, 313
WEBB AK. *See* DODD ME, 2(S38); VERMA A, 20(S38)
WEE M. *See* LUCAS DN, 346
WELLS C. *See* TUBRIDY N, 374
WESSELY S. *See* DEALE A, 310
WESTON M. *See* BARNETT N, 29
WHEELER DC. *See* MAJUMDAR A, 178
WHEELWRIGHT S. *See* BARON-COHEN S, 521
WHITE AD. *See* ADHIYAMAN V, 138
WHITEHOUSE CR. *See* UTTING MR, 247
WHITTEN M, IRVINE LM. Postmortem and perimortem caesarean section: what are the indications?, 6
WILKS C. The two cultures of medicine, 279(C)
WILLIAMS AN. Cerebral venous thrombosis: the first reported case of adolescent stroke?, 552(C)

WILLIAMS DI. RSM 1907: the acceptance of specialization, 642
WILSON SG. *See* DIREKZE NC, 373
WINSLET MC. *See* LOHN JWG, 365
WISE MH. *See* MUSTAFA MR, 26
WONG LS, *et al*. Stromal tumour of the small bowel, 145
WORWAG S, *et al*. Dipyridamole in the treatment of a neonate with persistent pulmonary hypertension, 77
WRIGHT M. *See* GOON P, 191
WYATT JC, ANAGNOSTELIS B. Reference material: books and multimedia packages, 244
WYATT JC.
Clinical questions and information needs, 168
Decision support systems, 629
Information for patients, 467
Intranets, 530
Keeping up: continuing education or lifelong learning?, 369
Knowledge and the Internet, 565
Practice guidelines and other support for clinical innovation, 299
Reading journals and monitoring the published work, 423
YENTIS SM. *See* LUCAS DN, 346
YOUNG A, KERR DJ. Genetic and immunological therapy for cancer, 10
YOUNG C. *See* NODDER D, 219

Subject Index

(C) correspondence
(E) editorial
(S38) supplement 38

ABORTION: 213(C)
the most pressing issue, 337(C)
ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY: future of paediatric, 484
ACCOUNTABILITY: clinical governance and acceptance of imperfection, 56, 214(C)
ACOUSTIC NEUROMA: is early management important?, 614
ACROMEGALY: primary thyrotoxicosis, a dense left hemiparesis and a right internal carotid aneurysm, 636
ACTINOMYCOSIS: abdominal presenting as psoas abscess, 195
ACUTE INTERMITTENT PORPHYRIA: two patients treated with nafarelin to prevent menstrual exacerbations, 429
ADAM, ROBERT: podiatric elegance in Fitzrovia, 86
ADVERTISING: direct-to-consumer, the future for Europe, 400
AGEING: relevance of animal models to humans, 296
AGE-RELATED DISTORTION, 35, 279(C)
AGONISTS: pharmaceutical industry innovation, 341
AIDS: condom use for preventing spread, an ethical imperative, 453
AIR EMBOLISM: sucking noise and collapse after removal of central venous catheter, 592
AIR POLLUTION:
better or worse, 288
death, 550(C)
AIR TRAVEL: holidays and cystic fibrosis, 20(S38)
AIRGUN PELLET: trauma, 500, 607
ALCOHOL: British Napoleonic soldier, red jackets and red noses, 38, 214(C)
ALCOHOLISM, CHRONIC: isolated corticotrophin deficiency, 15
ALIMENTARY HYPERGLYCAEMIA: mistaken for diabetes mellitus, 314
AMPHETAMINES: abuse and intracranial haemorrhage, 472
ANAESTHESIA: xenon, 513
ANALGESIA: placebo, 449(C)
ANAPHYLACTIC REACTION: to radioimmunotherapy despite plasmapheresis to remove anti-mouse antibodies, 75
ANDERSON, JANE: of Portobello 1889–1914, case of, 646
ANEURYSMS: with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), 160(C)
ANGEL'S TRUMPET: and the eye, 319
ANGIITIS, PRIMARY: central nervous system, 586
ANIMAL MODELS:
comparative medicine of senescence, 448(C)
relevance to human ageing, 296
ANKLE EXTENSOR RETINACULUM: rupture in a dancer, 638
ANTAGONISTS: pharmaceutical industry innovation, 341
ANTICHOLINERGIC SIDE-EFFECTS: drugs in elderly people, 457
ANTICOAGULANT THERAPY: cerebral venous thrombosis, 238
ANTI-MOUSE ANTIBODIES: anaphylactic reaction to radioimmunotherapy despite plasmapheresis, 75
ANTITHROMBOTIC THERAPY:
atrial fibrillation, 277(C), 278(C)
underutilization in atrial fibrillation, 138
AORTIC ROOT DILATATION: and aortic valve regurgitation in sclerosing mediastinitis, 83
AORTIC VALVE REGURGITATION: and aortic root dilatation in sclerosing mediastinitis, 83
AORTO-ILIAC BYPASS GRAFT INFECTIONS: associated with appendicitis, 78
APPENDICEAL ADENOCARCINOMA: with ovarian metastases in third trimester of pregnancy, 192
APPENDICECTOMY: Abraham Groves, 280
APPENDICITIS: aorto-iliac bypass graft infections associated with, 78
APPENDIX: Edward VII, 499(C)
ARTHRITIC HIP: femoral vein obstruction, 594
ARTHRITIS:
osteoarthritis and chronic fatigue syndrome in mother and child, 337(C)
psoriatic, 412
ARTISTIC INSPIRATION: migraine experiences as in a contemporary artist, 263
ASPIRIN: underutilization in atrial fibrillation, 138
ASTHMA: infections preventing, 52(C)
ATRIAL FIBRILLATION:
antithrombotic therapy, 277(C), 278(C)
underutilization of antithrombotic therapy, 138
AUTISM:
early identification by the CHecklist for Autism in Toddlers (CHAT), 521
intellectual disability, diagnostic and treatment issues, 351
AUTONOMIC NEUROPATHY: with B-cell lymphoma, 377

BACK PAIN, LOW: hospital referrals, more coherence needed, 135
BAIRD, JOHN LOGIE: fibreoptic pioneer, 438
BASE-OF-THUMB PAIN: randomized controlled trial of nettle sting, 305
B-CELL LYMPHOMA: with autonomic neuropathy, 377
BEAUTY: only skin deep, 89, 334(C)
BEHAVIOURAL PHENOTYPES, 618
BIAS: peer review, 338(C)
BILIARY OBSTRUCTION: extrahepatic, Epstein–Barr virus mimicking, 316
BILLROTH, THEODOR: this month in history, 54
BIRTH DEFECTS:
ancient records, 336(C)
described in Elizabethan ballads, 202
BIRTH RATE: the most pressing issue, 337(C)
BOOKS REVIEWED:
Ashcroft F, Life at the extremes: the science of survival, 601
Babington A, An uncertain voyage: an autobiography, 495
Barton SE & Hay PE, eds, Handbook of genitourinary medicine, 272
Bion J, Intensive care medicine, 209
Bliss M, William Osler: a life in medicine, 656
Blum RH & Heinrichs WL, Nausea and vomiting: overview, challenges, practical treatments and new perspectives, 548
Butler J, The ethics of health care rationing: principles and practice, 272
Butler P *et al*, eds, Applied radiological anatomy, 392
Carlino A (tr. J & AC Tedeschi), Books of the body: anatomical ritual and Renaissance learning, 446
Charlton B, Psychiatry and the human condition, 655
Cheta DM, Preventing diabetes theory, practice and new approaches, 105
Damasio A, Descartes' error reason and the human brain, 99
Darling KEA, Guide to working in Europe for doctors, 392
David T *et al*, Problem-based learning in medical education, 272
Davies JK & Macdonald G, eds, Quality, evidence and effectiveness in health promotion: striving for certainties, 271
Dickinson J, 21 Medical mysteries, 658
Digby A, The evolution of British general practice 1850–1948, 327
Downie RS, The healing arts: an Oxford illustrated anthology, 496
Downie RS & Macnaughton J, Clinical judgement: evidence in practice, 440
Dubowitz LM *et al*, The neurological assessment of the preterm and full-term newborn infant, 391
Evans TW *et al*, eds, Intensive care medicine, 209
Firth-Cozens J & Payne R, eds, Stress in health professionals, 208
Fleischer Jr. AB, The clinical management of itching, 393
Gabbay M, ed, The evidence-based primary care handbook, 155
Gaston JHS, ed, Rheumatic diseases immunological mechanisms and prospects for new therapies, 103

Godlee F & Jefferson T, eds, Peer review in health sciences, 47
Goedert JJ, ed, Infectious causes of cancer: targets for intervention, 544
Gootenberg P, Cocaine: global histories, 602
Harper PS, Practical genetic counselling, 50
Harrison A & Dixon J, The NHS, facing the future, 326
Harrison T, Bion, Rickman, Foulkes and the Northfield Experiments: advancing on a different front, 443
Healy D, The psychopharmacologists III: the interviews, 652
Hester M *et al*, Making an impact, children and domestic violence, 155
Horgan J, The undiscovered mind how the brain defies explanation, 152
Jadresic A *et al*, Psiconeuroendocrinologia, 659
James DG & Zumla A, The granulomatous disorders, 271
Johnstone EC *et al*, Schizophrenia—concepts and clinical management, 51
Joyce CRB *et al*, eds, Individual quality of life approaches to conceptualisation and assessment, 212
Kirby RS *et al*, eds, Men's health, 154
Kolata G, Flu the story of the great influenza pandemic of 1918 and the search for the virus that caused it, 210
Kuhse H & Singer P, eds, Bioethics, and anthology, 48
Law J *et al*, eds, Communication difficulties in childhood, 331
Loudon I, The tragedy of childbed fever, 445
Meads G & Ashcroft J, Relationships in the NHS, 497
Meara J & Koller WC, Parkinson's disease and parkinsonism in the elderly, 653
Porter JDH & Grange JM, eds, Tuberculosis: an interdisciplinary perspective, 390
Poser CM & Bruyn GW, An illustrated history of malaria, 546
Poste G *et al*, eds, Impact of genomics in healthcare, 101
Pui C-H, ed, Childhood leukemias, 604
Randall F & Downie RS, Palliative care ethics, a companion for all specialties, 102
Ratnaike RN, Diarrhoea and constipation in geriatric practice, 447
Richardson R, Larrey—surgeon to Napoleon's Imperial Guard, 657
Richardson WF & Carman JB, trans, On the fabric of the human body book II, the ligaments and muscles, 156
Ridley M, Genome: the autobiography of a species in 23 chapters, 269
Roitt I & Rabson A, Really essential medical immunology, 654
Ron MA & David AS, eds, Disorders of brain and mind, 211
Sackett DL *et al*, Evidence-based medicine: how to practice and teach EBM, 2nd edition, 602
Samuels MA, ed, Hospital neurology, 154
Schott J, Culture, religion and patient care in a multi-ethnic society a handbook for professionals, 209
Schrezenmeier H & Bacigalupo A, Aplastic anemia: pathophysiology and treatment, 547
Sexar MD, Manual of tropical paediatrics, 655
Sheikh A & Gatrad AR, eds, Caring for Muslim patients, 545
Slop, Dr, A Trust in conflict, 157
Smith JM, Producing patient-centred health care: patient perspectives about health and illness and the physician/patient relationship, 442
Smith T, Ethics in medical research a handbook of good practice, 104
Stanley F *et al*, Cerebral palsies: epidemiology and causal pathways, 495
Straus E, Rosalyn Yalow, Nobel laureate: her life and work in medicine, 444
Studd J, ed, The management of the menopause: the millennium review 2000, 326
Tansey EM & Christie DA, eds, Haemophilia: recent history of clinical management, 329
Tansey EM & Reynolds LA, eds, Early heart transplant surgery in the UK, 328
Unterkircher F, Medicina Antiqua: Codex Vindobonensis 93 Vienna, 445
Usherwood T, Understanding the consultation evidence, theory and practice, 103
While R & Attwood M, Professional development: a guide for general practice, 603
WHO Collaborating Centre for Mental Health Research and Training, WHO guide to mental health in primary care, 546
Williams H, ed, Atopic dermatitis: the epidemiology, causes and prevention of atopic eczema, 549
Wootton R & Craig J, eds, Introduction to telemedicine, 49
Yates DW, ed, Trauma, 330

BOOK-WRITING: so you want to write a textbook, 150, 276(C)
BOSWELL, JAMES: teetering on the verge of complete sanity, 434
BRAINSTEM HAEMORRHAGE: John Cheyne, 338
BREAST: isolated sarcoidosis, 196
BREAST ADENOCARCINOMA: minimal change nephropathy, 539
BREAST IMPLANTS: silicone gel controversy, rise of expert panels and fall of junk science, 31
BRITISH PAEDIATRIC SURVEILLANCE UNIT: and similar clinician-based systems, public health outputs, 580
BRONCHODILATORS: cystic fibrosis, 37(S38)
BUBONIC PLAGUE:
biblical times, 449(C)
treatments for, reports from seventeenth century British epidemics, 322
BURKHOLDERIA CEPACIA: infection control in cystic fibrosis, 40(S38)
BURSITIS: management of acute, 54(C)

CAESAREAN SECTION:
postmortem and perimortem, what are the indications?, 6, 215(C)
urgency, a new classification, 346
CANCER:
chemoprevention, a reality, 518
James Ewing, 216
quality of life and expectations of cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy, 621
survival, 501(E)
CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING: parkinsonism secondary to, 53(C)
correction, 162
CARREL, ALEXIS: this month in history, 108
CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM: primary angiitis, 586
CENTRAL VENOUS CATHETER: sucking noise and collapse after removal, 592
CEREBELLAR SYNDROME: complicating *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* pneumonia, 28
CEREBRAL PALSY: Claudius' movement disorder, the emperor with the shaking head, 335(C), 550(C)
CEREBRAL VENOUS THROMBOSIS:
first reported case of adolescent stroke, 552(C)
local thrombolysis, 241
making the most of imaging, 234
medical therapy, 238
pathogenesis, presentation and prognosis, 230
CERVICAL SYMPATHETIC CHAIN DYSFUNCTION: whiplash injury, 378
CHECKLIST FOR AUTISM IN TODDLERS (CHAT): early detection of autism, 521
CHEMOPREVENTION OF CANCER: a reality, 518
CHEMOTHERAPY:
alternatives to resection for colorectal liver metastases, 576
colorectal cancer, 416
pancreatic carcinoma downstaging, 432
CHESELDEN, WILLIAM: this month in history, 162
CHEST X-RAYS: GPs response to reports of abnormal, 159(C)
CHEYNE, JOHN: brainstem haemorrhage, 338
CHILD HEALTH: and paediatrics, coat of arms, 389, 550(C)
CHILDBIRTH:
case of Jane Anderson, Portobello, 1889–1914, 646
flux of the reds, evolution of active management of third stage of labour, 489
CHILDREN:
chronic fatigue syndrome, course in childhood, 129
investigation and treatment of thyroglossal cysts, 18
nut allergy, investigation and management, 283
nutritional needs of refugees in the UK, 360
pulled elbow, 336(C)
surgical management of *Mycobacterium avium intracellulare* infection, 536

too ill to learn, double jeopardy in education, 114
CHOLECYSTECTOMY: Carl Langenbuch, 396
CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME:
course in childhood, 129
diagnosis of psychiatric disorder in clinical evaluation, 310
in mother and child, 337(C)
CHRONIC RENAL FAILURE: lipid abnormalities, 178
CIDOFOVIR: progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy with dermatomyositis, unsuccessful treatment, 374
CLAUDIUS: movement disorder, the emperor with the shaking head, 198, 335(C), 550(C)
CLINICAL DIAGNOSIS: necropsy function, 463, 662(C)
CLINICAL GOVERNANCE: accountability and acceptance of imperfection, 56, 214(C)
CLINICAL INNOVATION: practice guidelines and other support, 299
CLINICAL JUDGEMENT: 605(C)
CLINICAL QUESTIONS: information needs, 168
COAGULATION ANALYSIS: Sonoclot of *in vitro* haemodilution with resuscitation solutions, 507
COAT OF ARMS: paediatrics and child health, 389, 550(C)
COLIC: infantile and gripe water, 172
COLITIS: collagenous, restorative proctocolectomy, 261
COLORECTAL CANCER:
chemotherapy, 416
heparin, 554(C)
COLORECTAL LIVER METASTASES: alternatives to resection, 576
COMMON BILE DUCT: chicken bone injury, 84
COMPARATIVE MEDICINE: hypertension in dogs, 451(E)
COMPLIANCE: conundrum in cystic fibrosis, 9(S38)
COMPUTER-AIDED DRUG DESIGN (CADD): pharmaceutical industry innovation, 341
CONDOMS: use for preventing spread of HIV/AIDS, an ethical imperative, 453
CONFIDENTIALITY: general practitioners' attitudes to sexual activity in under-sixteens, 563
CONSCIOUSNESS:
medical constraints on the quantum mind, 571
unexplained loss in systemic mastocytosis, 141
CONSULTATION SKILLS: medical students before and after changes in curriculum, 247
CONTINUING EDUCATION: or lifelong learning, 369
CONTRACEPTION: 213(C)
general practitioners' attitudes to sexual activity in under-sixteens, 563
the most pressing issue, 337(C)
CORNEA: surgery to alter curvature, 118
CORTICOTROPHIN: isolated deficiency in chronic alcoholism, 15
COURT APPEARANCES: witnesses, 387, 499(C)
COVERT MEDICATION: in food and drink, a pill in the sandwich, 408
CRANIAL NERVE PALSY: bilateral sixth and fourth in idiopathic intracranial hypertension, 80
CROWN COURT: witness appearances, 387, 499(C)
CULTURES OF MEDICINE: two, 279(C)
CURE: to cure or not to cure, that is *not* the question, 611
CYSTIC FIBROSIS: 1(S38)
bronchodilators, 37(S38)
compliance conundrum, 9(S38)
holidays, 20(S38)
infection control, methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus, Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and *Burkholderia cepacia* complex, 40(S38)
physiotherapy, 27(S38)
role of vitamins, 14(S38)
understanding non-compliance with treatment in adults, 2(S38)
CYTARABINE: progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy with dermatomyositis, unsuccessful treatment, 374
CYTOTOXIC T LYMPHOCYTE ADOPTIVE THERAPY: genetic and immunological therapy for cancer, 10

DATURA: angel's trumpet and the eye, 319
DECEPTION: 163(E)
bias in peer review, 338(C)
DECISION SUPPORT SYSTEMS: 629
DEMENTIA: reversible in Paget's disease, 595
DIABETES MELLITUS:
alimentary hyperglycaemia mistaken for, 314
who looks after people? Primary or secondary care, 183
DIABETIC NEPHROPATHY: genetics of and microalbuminuria, 62
DIAPHRAGM: intact, haemothorax via, 634
DIPYRIDAMOLE: treatment of neonate with persistent pulmonary hypertension, 77
DISABILITY: educating health professionals, 397(E), 606(C)
DISTORTION: age-related, 35
DOG MODELS: comparative medicine of senescence, 448(C)
DOMICILIARY VISITS: value of to the old and mentally ill, 187
DRUG ABUSE: the wrong message, 339(C)
DRUGS: anticholinergic side-effects in elderly people, 457
DUAL X-RAY ABSORPTIOMETRY (DXA): osteoporosis services in secondary care, a UK survey, 22
DYSTONIA: Claudius' movement disorder, the emperor with the shaking head, 198, 335(C), 550(C)

EAR DISEASE: Prosper Meniere, 500
EARTHQUAKES: medical relief, 59
ECSTASY HYPERPYREXIA: bilateral gluteal compartment syndrome, 260
EDUCATION:
disability, 397(E), 606(C)
too ill to learn, double jeopardy for sick children, 114
ELBOW: pulled, 336(C)
ELDER ABUSE: general practitioner knowledge, 67
ELDERLY:
anticholinergic side-effects of drugs, 457
value of domiciliary visits, 187
ELECTROCARDIOGRAM (ECG): evolving changes in patient with hyperthyroidism, 589
ELECTROCUTION: bilateral scapular fractures, 143
ELIZABETHAN BALLADS: birth defects described in, 202
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: meningitis, 225, 450(C)
EPIDEMIOLOGY: integration with medicine, the troublesome search for evidence, 402
EPIDERMOID CYST: giant of the skull, two historical cases treated surgically, 597
EPSTEIN–BARR VIRUS (EBV): infection mimicking extrahepatic biliary obstruction, 316
ETHICS APPROVAL: costs of seeking before and after introduction of multicentre research ethics committees, 511
ETHICS COMMITTEES, 107(C)
EVIDENCE: troublesome search, three cultures in need of integration, 402
EWING, JAMES: account of tumour, 216
EXPECTATION:
quality of: healing, palliation or disappointment, 609(E)
and quality of life of cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy, 621
EXPEDITION HEALTH AND SAFETY: risk assessment, 557
EXPERIMENTAL ALLERGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS: multiple sclerosis, 551(C)
EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE: integration with medicine, the troublesome search for evidence, 402
EXPERT PANELS: silicone gel breast implant controversy rise of expert panels and fall of junk science, 31
EXPERT WITNESS: Crown Court appearances, 387, 499(C)
EYE: surgical correction of refractive errors, 118, 274(C), 333(C)

FACIAL PAIN: intracranial aneurysm, 479
FAMILY PLANNING: 213(C)
the most pressing issue, 1(E)
FEMORAL VEIN OBSTRUCTION: arthritic hip, 594
FERTILITY: 213(C)
the most pressing issue, 337(C)
FETAL GROWTH: causes of impaired, 159(C)
FEVER: imported, a survival guide, 124
FIBREOPTICS: John Logie Baird—pioneer, 438

FITZROY SQUARE: podiatric elegance, 86
5-FLUOROURACIL: colorectal cancer, 416
FOODSTUFF: covert medication, 408
FOREARM: combined Galeazzi and Monteggia fracture, 144
FOREIGN BODY: chicken bone injury of common bile duct, 84
FRACTURE:
bilateral scapular after electrocution, 143
forearm, combined Galeazzi and Monteggia, 144
***FUSOBACTERIUM* INFECTION:** Lemierre's syndrome, 480

GALEAZZI FRACTURE: 394(C)
GALEN OF PERGAMON: statue, 607
GENERAL PRACTITIONERS:
attitudes to sexual activity in under-sixteens, 563
domiciliary visits to the old and mentally ill, value of, 187
knowledge of elder abuse, 67
primary care and public involvement, achieving a balanced partnership, 3
response to reports of abnormal chest X-rays, 159(C)
struck-off mystery, 106(C)
GENETIC THERAPY: for cancer, 10
GENODIVERSITY: 'I love you' virus, 398(E)
GENOMICS: pharmaceutical industry innovation, 341
GLAUCOMA: clinical management, 175
GLUE-SNIFFING: multiple-sclerosis-like syndrome association, 313
GLUTEAL COMPARTMENT SYNDROME: bilateral after ecstasy hyperpyrexia, 260
GRAND MAL: hypotension, 276(C), 498(C)
GRAND TOUR: Professor James Jeffray, 42
GRIPE WATER: story, 172
GROIN SEPSIS: after hip replacement, 262
GROVES, ABRAHAM: appendicectomy in North America, 280

HAEMODIALYSIS: first successful, 266
HAEMOTHORAX: via an intact diaphragm, 634
HARLEY STREET: address, 108(C)
HEADACHE: hypertension and Horner's syndrome, 535
HEALTH IMPROVEMENT: Royal Society of Medicine, 111
HEALTH SERVICES: to cure or not to cure, that is *not* the question, 611
HEALTH SURVEYS: via the Internet, quick and dirty or rapid and robust, 356
HEMIPARESIS: dense left, primary thyrotoxicosis, acromegaly and a right internal carotid aneurysm, 636
HEPARIN:
colorectal cancer, 554(C)
combined with intrathrombus therapy for cerebral venous thrombosis, 238
HERMANSKY–PUDLAK SYNDROME: presenting with subdural haematoma and retinal hemorrhages in infancy, 591
HERPES ZOSTER OPHTHALMICUS: 191
pain management, 334(C)
HIDRADENITIS SUPPURATIVA: 420, 661(C)
surgical treatment, 606(C)
HIP: arthritic and femoral vein obstruction, 594
HIP REPLACEMENT:
groin sepsis, look beyond the hip, 262
Pasteurella multocida infection, 478
HIPPOCRATES: bronze bust, 396
HIV INFECTION: condom use for preventing spread, an ethical imperative, 453
HODGES, NATHANIEL: bubonic plague, treatments for, reports from seventeenth century British epidemics, 322
HOLIDAYS: cystic fibrosis, 20(S38)
HOLTER, SIR RICHARD: 93
HORNER'S SYNDROME: headache and hypertension, 535
HOSPITAL REFERRAL: for low back pain, more coherence needed, 135
HOSPITALISTS: for the NHS, 504, 661(C)
HYPERCALCAEMIA: symptomless, primary hyperparathyroidism, 375
HYPERGLYCAEMIA: alimentary mistaken for diabetes mellitus, 314
HYPERPARATHYROIDISM: primary and symptomless hypercalcaemia, 375
HYPERPYREXIA: ecstasy and bilateral gluteal compartment syndrome, 260
HYPERTENSION:
dogs, value of comparative medicine, 451(E)
headache and Horner's syndrome, 535
HYPERTHYROIDISM: evolving electrocardiographic changes, 589
HYPERVENTILATION: mitochondrial myopathy, 25
HYPOTENSION:
grand mal, 276(C), 498(C)
unexplained loss of consciousness, systemic mastocytosis, 141

'I LOVE YOU' VIRUS: implications for genodiversity, 398(E)
IGUANA: salmonella meningitis, 318
ILIAC BYPASS: simultaneous with cadaveric renal transplantation, 26
IMAGING: cerebral venous thrombosis, 234
IMMUNOLOGICAL THERAPY: for cancer, 10
INDIA: palliative care, 292
INFANTS: Hermansky–Pudlak syndrome presenting with subdural haematoma and retinal haemorrhages, 591
INFECTIONS: asthma prevention, 52(C)
INFLUENZA: implications of Relenza ruling, 55(E)
INFORMATION:
needs and clinical questions, 168
for patients, 467
INSULIN COMA THERAPY: schizophrenia, 147, 332(C), 449(C)
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY: and autism, diagnostic and treatment issues, 351
INTERNAL CAROTID ANEURYSM, RIGHT: primary thyrotoxicosis, acromegaly and a dense left hemiparesis, 636
INTERNET:
health surveys via, quick and dirty or rapid and robust, 356
intranets, 530
knowledge and, 565
slimming, 254
INTESTINAL OBSTRUCTION: unusual causes, 365
INTRACRANIAL ANEURYSM: facial pain, 479
INTRACRANIAL HAEMORRHAGE: amphetamine abuse, 472
INTRACRANIAL HYPERTENSION, IDIOPATHIC: bilateral sixth and fourth cranial nerve palsy, 80, 216(C)
INTRANETS: 530

JAUNDICE: pancreatic tumour, 430
JEFFRAY, PROFESSOR JAMES: grand tour, 42
JOURNALS: reading and monitoring published work, 423
JUGULAR VENOUS PRESSURE: raised, 213(C)

KNEE PAIN: malign anterior, 639
KNOWLEDGE FOR THE CLINICIAN: 163(E)
and the Internet, 565
clinical questions and information needs, 168
decision support systems, 629
Information for patients, 467
Intranets, 530
keeping up, continuing education or lifelong learning, 369
keeping up by teaching, 499(C)
Practice guidelines and other support for clinical innovation, 299
reading journals and monitoring published work, 423
reference material, books and multimedia packages, 244
KOLFF ARTIFICIAL KIDNEY: first successful haemodialysis, 266

LABOUR: evolution of active management of third stage, 489
LANGENBUCH, CARL: 396
LARVA THERAPY: 394(C)
in wound management, 72
LASER PROCEDURES: surgical correction of refractive errors, 118
LEG INJURY: Florence Starling, 384
LEMIERRE'S SYNDROME: *Fusobacterium* infection, 480
LENS: intraocular refractive surgery, 118
LIFELONG LEARNING: or continuing education, 369
LIPID ABNORMALITIES: renal disease, 178
LIVER METASTASES: colorectal, alternatives to resection, 576
LIVING WILLS: 395(C), 499(C)

LUNG CARCINOMA: wriggling muscles as a sign, 373

MACBETH: sleep disorders, 87
MADELUNG'S DISEASE: hereditary, 194
MAGGOTS: in wound management, 72
MALARIA:
imported, a survival guide, 124
with positive monospot test, 336(C)
Ronald Ross, 450
MASTOCYTOSIS, SYSTEMIC: unexplained loss of consciousness, 141
MEDIAN NERVE: fibrolipoma, 106(C)
MEDICAL ERROR: national database, 106(C), 215(C)
MEDICAL HISTORY: contemporary – help wanted, 662(C)
MEDICAL STUDENTS: consultation skills before and after changes in curriculum, 247
MEDICINE IN THE MILLENNIUM: 37
MENIÈRE, PROSPER: ear disease, 500
MENINGITIS:
emergency management, 225, 450(C)
salmonella and a green iguana, 318
streptococcal group A with an infected BCG scar, 641
MENTALLY ILL: value of domiciliary visits, 187
METHICILLIN-RESISTANT *STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS*: infection control in cystic fibrosis, 40(S38)
MICROALBUMINURIA: genetics of diabetic nephropathy, 62
MIGRAINE: experiences as artistic inspiration in a contemporary artist, 263
MILITARY:
alcohol and the British Napoleonic soldier, red jackets and red noses, 38
medicine at the Battle of Stalingrad, 97
tracheostomy, 607(C)
tracheostomy and tracheal intubation, 380
MIND: quantum and medical constraints, 571
MISSING OR NEGLECTED: poem, 282
MISUSE OF DRUGS ACT: 339(C)
MITOCHONDRIAL MYOPATHY: hyperventilation, 25
MONTEGGIA FRACTURE: 394(C)
MOVEMENT DISORDER: Claudius, the emperor with the shaking head, 198, 335(C), 550(C)
MULTICENTRE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEES: costs of seeking ethics approval before and after introduction, 511
MULTIPLE CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY: 160(C)
MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS:
care needs for 2000 and beyond, 219
experimental allergic encephalomyelitis, 551(C)
MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS-LIKE SYNDROME: associated with glue-sniffing, 313
MUSCLES: wriggling as a sign of lung carcinoma, 373
MYCOBACTERIUM AVIUM INTRACELLULARE: surgical management of infection in children, 536
***MYCOPLASMA PNEUMONIAE* PNEUMONIA:** cerebellar syndrome complicating, 28
MYDRIASIS: angel's trumpet and the eye, 319
MYOKYMIA: wriggling muscles as a sign of lung carcinoma, 373
MYOPATHY, MITOCHONDRIAL: hyperventilation, 25
MYXOID CHONDROSARCOMA: malign anterior knee pain, 639

NAFARELIN: treatment of two patients with acute intermittent porphyria to prevent menstrual exacerbations, 429
NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE:
evaluative research becoming part of routine care, 555(E)
hospitalists, 504, 661(C)
needs a voice of its own, 217(E)
politics and policies, 487
Seattle and the World Trade Organization, 109(E)
Staff College, 448(C)
voice, 395(C)
NECROPSY: clinical diagnosis and function, 463, 662(C)
NEOMYCIN: recurrent sulphaemoglobinaemia treatment, 428
NEPHROPATHY: minimal change with adenocarcinoma of breast, 539
NEPHROTIC SYNDROME: lipid abnormalities, 178
NETTLE STING: randomized controlled trial for treatment of base-of-thumb pain, 305
NEURAL CELLS: replacement of damaged, 52(C)
NEUROMYOTOMIA: wriggling muscles as a sign of lung carcinoma, 373
NICE:
implications of Relenza ruling, 55(E)
unanswered questions, 54(C)
NON-COMPLIANCE:
conundrum in cystic fibrosis, 9(S38)
understanding in adults with cystic fibrosis, 2(S38)
NUT ALLERGY: in children, investigation and management, 283
NUTRITIONAL NEEDS: refugee children in the UK, 360

OBITUARY: John Swales, 610
ONAN: sin of, 159(C), 275(C)
OPHTHALMIC ZOSTER:
pain management, 334(C)
sine herpete, 191
OPIOIDS, ENDOGENOUS: placebo effect, 158(C)
ORBIT: pulsatile veins, 335(C)
ORGAN DONATION: attitudes among South Asians in UK, 161(C)
OSLER, SIR WILLIAM: abroad with Jane, 93
OSTEOARTHRITIS: chronic fatigue syndrome in mother and child, 337(C)
OSTEOPOROSIS: services in secondary care, a UK survey, 22
OVARIAN METASTASES: appendiceal adenocarcinoma in third trimester of pregnancy, 192

PAEDIATRICS:
and child health, coat of arms, 389, 550(C)
future of accident and emergency, 484
public health outputs from British Paediatric Surveillance Unit and similar clinician-based systems, 580
research, 448(C)
PAGET'S DISEASE: reversible dementia, 595
PALLIATIVE CARE: India, 292
PANCREATIC CARCINOMA: downstaging by chemotherapy, 432
PANCREATIC TUMOUR: with jaundice, good prognosis, 430
PANCREATICODUODENECTOMY: after downstaging of pancreatic carcinoma by chemotherapy, 432
PAPILLARY CYSTIC EPITHELIAL NEOPLASMS OF THE PANCREAS (PCENP): 430
PARKINSONISM: secondary to carbon monoxide poisoning, 53(C)
correction, 162
PASTEURELLA MULTOCIDA: infection of a hip replacement, 478
PATIENTS: information for, 467
PEANUT ALLERGY: in children, investigation and management, 283
PEER REVIEW: bias, 338(C)
PERICALYCEAL HAEMANGIOMA: papillary necrosis, 482
PERSISTENT PULMONARY HYPERTENSION OF THE NEWBORN: dipyridamole in treatment, 77
PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY:
direct-to-consumer advertising, the future for Europe, 400
innovation in, 341, 606(C)
PHYSIOTHERAPY: cystic fibrosis, 27(S38)
PLACEBO:
analgesia, 449(C)
biblical origins, 213(C), 334(C)
effect and endogenous opioids, 158(C)
and placebo effects in medicine, 53(C)
PLAGUE:
biblical times, 449(C)
East Suffolk 1906–1918, 539
rats and the bible, 553(C)
treatments for, reports from seventeenth century British epidemics, 322
POLLUTION, AIR:
better or worse, 288
and death, 550(C)
POOR LAW: St Leonard's Workhouse, Shoreditch, London, 554
POPULATION CONTROL: the most pressing issue, 337(C)

PRACTICE GUIDELINES: and other support for clinical innovation, 299
PREGNANCY: appendiceal adenocarcinoma with ovarian metastases in third trimester, 192
PRESENTEEISM: goodbye to, 281(E), 553(C)
PRESSURE SORES: limits of prevention, 107(C)
PRIMARY ANGIITIS OF THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM (PACNS): 586
PRIMARY CARE:
people with diabetes, 183
public involvement, achieving a balanced partnership, 3
PRIMARY OPEN ANGLE GLAUCOMA (POAG): 175
PROCTOCOLECTOMY: restorative for collagenous colitis, 261
PROGRESSIVE MULTIFOCAL LEUKOENCEPHALOPATHY: with dermatomyositis, unsuccessful treatment with cidofovir and cytarabine, 374
***PSEUDOMONAS AERUGINOSA*:** infection control in cystic fibrosis, 40(S38)
PSOAS ABSCESS: abdominal actinomycosis presenting as, 195
PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS: 412
PSYCHIATRIC DISORDER: diagnosis in clinical evaluation of chronic fatigue syndrome, 310
PSYCHIATRY: predictions for, 649
PUBLIC HEALTH: outputs from the British Paediatric Surveillance Unit and similar clinician-based systems, 580
PUBLISHED WORK: monitoring and reading journals, 423
PUERPERAL SEPSIS: cause and prevention, 280, 394(C)

QUALITY OF LIFE:
expectation: healing, palliation or disappointment, 609(E)
and expectations of cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy, 621

RADIOIMMUNOTHERAPY: anaphylactic reaction despite plasmapheresis to remove anti-mouse antibodies, 75
RADIOTHERAPY: quality of life and expectations of cancer patients, 621
RATS: plague and the bible, 553(C)
REFERENCE MATERIAL: books and multimedia packages, 241
REFRACTIVE ERRORS: surgical correction, 118, 274(C), 333(C)
REFUGEES: nutritional needs of children in the UK, 360
RELENZA: implications of ruling, 55(E)
RENAL DISEASE: lipid abnormalities, 178
RENAL FAILURE:
end-stage and genetics of diabetic nephropathy and microalbuminuria, 62
lipid abnormalities, 178
RENAL PAPILLARY NECROSIS: pericalyceal haemangioma, 482
RENAL TRANSPLANTATION: cadaveric with simultaneous iliac bypass, 26
RESEARCH: evaluative becoming part of routine care in NHS, 555(E)
RESPIRATORY SYSTEM: clinical examination, 158(C)
RESUSCITATION SOLUTIONS: Sonoclot coagulation analysis of *in vitro* haemodilution, 507
RETINAL HAEMORRHAGES: Hermansky–Pudlak syndrome presenting with in infancy, 591
RETRORECTAL CYSTIC HAMARTOMA: extrarectal mass, 85
REVIEWER BIAS: randomized controlled study of against unconventional therapy, 164
RISK ASSESSMENT: expedition health and safety, 557
ROSES: red and white, 550(C)
ROSS, RONALD: malaria, 450
ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE:
acceptance of specialization, 642
health improvement, 111
ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE FORUMS:
Learning Disability, 351
Learning Disability and Society for the Study of Behavioural Phenotypes, 618
Medical Communication, 247
Quality in Health Care, 56
ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE SECTIONS:
Accident & Emergency, 124, 225, 484, 507
Anaesthesia, 513
Clinical, 85, 195, 432
Clinical Neurosciences, 230, 234, 238, 241
Coloproctology, 420, 576
Comparative Medicine, 288
Dermatology, 412, 420
Geriatrics and Gerontology, 296
History of Medicine, 389, 489, 642
Nephrology, 178
Neurosciences, 230
Obstetrics & Gynaecology, 489
Oncology, 416
Ophthalmology, 118, 175
Otology, 614
Paediatrics, 62, 389
Paediatrics & Child Health, 2(S38), 9(S38), 14(S38), 20(S38), 27(S38), 37(S38), 40(S38), 580
Pharmaceutical Medicine and Research, 341
Plastic Surgery, 31, 194
Psychiatry, 649
Rheumatology and Rehabilitation, 412
United Services Section, 380
RUNYON, DAMON: on smoking, 549

SALMONELLA: meningitis and a green iguana, 318
SARCOIDOSIS: isolated of breast, 196
SCAPULA: bilateral fractures after electrocution, 143
SCHIZOPHRENIA: insulin coma therapy, 147, 332(C), 449(C)
SCLEROSING MEDIASTINITIS: with aortic valve regurgitation and aortic root dilatation, 83
SCROFULA: Sir Frederick Treves' drawings, 340, 550(C)
SECONDARY CARE: people with diabetes, 183
SENESCENCE: comparative medicine, 448(C)
SEXUAL ACTIVITY: general practitioners' attitudes to in under-sixteens, 563
SIN OF ONAN: 159(C), 275(C)
SISTRUNK'S PROCEDURE: investigation and treatment of thyroglossal cysts in children, 18
SKULL: giant epidermoid cyst, two historical cases treated surgically, 597
SLEEP APNOEA: snoring with, deceptive appearance, 81
SLEEP DISORDERS: in the Macbeths, 87
SLIMMING: on the Internet, 254
SMALL BOWEL: stromal tumour, 145
SMALL BOWEL OBSTRUCTION:
after blunt trauma, 498(C)
non-Meckel diverticulum, 498(C)
unusual causes, 365
SMOKING: Damon Runyon on, 549
SNORING: with sleep apnoea, deceptive appearances, 81
SONOCLOT COAGULATION ANALYSIS: of *in vitro* haemodilution with resuscitation solutions, 507
SPECIALIZATION: RSM 1907, 642
SPINAL MANIPULATION: adverse effects, 258
SQUALOR: non-senile, 107(C)
ST LEONARD'S WORKHOUSE, SHOREDITCH, LONDON: 554
STALINGRAD, BATTLE OF: medicine at, 97
***STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS*, METHICILLIN-RESISTANT:** infection control in cystic fibrosis, 40(S38)
STARLING, FLORENCE: leg injury, 384
STATISTICAL SCIENCE: integration with medicine, the troublesome search for evidence, 402
STERILIZATION: the most pressing issue, 337(C)
STREPTOCOCCAL GROUP A MENINGITIS: with an infected BCG scar, 641
STROKE:
acromegaly, primary thyrotoxicosis, a dense left hemiparesis and a right internal carotid aneurysm, 636
cerebral venous thrombosis, first reported case of adolescent stroke, 552(C)
STROMAL TUMOUR: small bowel, 145
SUBDURAL HAEMATOMA: Hermansky–Pudlak syndrome presenting with in infancy, 591
SUFFOLK: plague outbreaks, 539
SULPHAEMOGLOBINAEMIA: recurrent treated with neomycin, 428
SURVIVAL: cancer, 501(E)
SWALES, JOHN: obituary, 610
SYSTEMIC LUPUS ERYTHEMATOSUS (SLE): with aneurysms, 160(C)
SYSTEMIC THROMBOLYTIC THERAPY: cerebral venous thrombosis, 238

TAILGUT CYST: 499(C)
extrarectal mass, 85
modified approach to excision, 275(C)
TEACHING: value of keeping up, 499(C)
TETRACOSACTRIN TEST: isolated corticotrophin deficiency in chronic alcoholism, 15
TEXTBOOK: writing, 150, 276(C)
THERMAL ABLATION: alternatives to resection for colorectal liver metastases, 576
THIRD REICH: continuing legacy, 551(C)
THROMBOLYSIS: cerebral venous thrombosis, 241
THYROGLOSSAL CYSTS: investigation and treatment in children, 18
THYROTOXICOSIS: primary, acromegaly, a dense left hemiparesis and a right internal carotid aneurysm, 636
TIGER BITES: 160(C), 279(C)
TIN MINERS: health of Cornish, 159(C)
TRACHEAL INTUBATION: and tracheostomy in military history, 380
TRACHEOSTOMY:
and tracheal intubation in military history, 380
in war, 607(C)
TRAUMA:
airgun pellet, 500, 608
small bowel obstruction, 498(C)
TREVES, FREDERICK:
Drawings of Changes in Scofulous Glands, 340, 550(C)
Edward VII's appendix, 499(C)
TUBEROUS SCLEROSIS: clinical diagnosis, 538
TUMOUR ANTIGENS: genetic and immunological therapy for cancer, 10

ULTRASOUND SCANNING: investigation and treatment of thyroglossal cysts in children, 18
UNCONVENTIONAL THERAPY: randomized controlled study of reviewer bias, 164
UTERINE HAEMORRHAGE: flux of the reds, evolution of active management of third stage of labour, 489

VARICOSE VEINS:
differential diagnosis, 279(C)
pulsatile, 29, 213(C), 335(C)
VASCULITIS: primary angiitis of the central nervous system (PACNS), 586
VESTIBULAR SCHWANNOMA: is early management important?, 614
VITAMINS: role in cystic fibrosis, 14(S38)

WAR: tracheostomy, 607(C)
WARFARIN: underutilization in atrial fibrillation, 138
WEIGHT LOSS DIETS: slimming on the Internet, 254
WHIPLASH INJURY:
cervical sympathetic chain dysfunction, 378
double, 662(C)
why are we achieving so little?, 526
WITNESSES: Crown Court appearance, 387, 499(C)
WOODALL, JOHN: bubonic plague, treatments for, reports from seventeenth century British epidemics, 322
WORKING HOURS:
goodbye to presenteeism, 281(E)
how long is full time?, 553(C)
WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION: Seattle and the NHS, 109(E)
WOUNDS: larva therapy in management, 72
WRITING: textbook, 150, 276(C)

XENON: anaesthesia, 513

ZOONOSES: salmonella meningitis, 318

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The *Journal* is a benefit of membership of the Royal Society of Medicine and through it we aim to offer Fellows something stimulating or instructive or entertaining each month (preferably all three). It has also won a large readership outside the Society. As with medicine itself, the scope is almost limitless—from the clinical anecdote to the latest synthetic molecule, from health service politics to hermeneutics, from bronze age archaeology to art in hospitals. Our guiding principle is that good specialists read outside their specialty. Solemnity is not compulsory.

For scientific work we offer a brisk review process, and can publish high-priority papers 6–8 weeks after acceptance, correspondence and meeting reports in as little as 3; thus, we attract good papers by offering an efficient service to authors. Our prime responsibility, however, is to the readers. If you are thinking of submitting a paper, please bear in mind that our readers come from the world over, from many specialties and some from none. Whereas in a specialist journal you may be writing for colleagues with shared knowledge (and jargon), in the *JRSM* you seek to engage wider attention. Do not be too proud to explain complexities; say why your message is important; and be brief.

With these provisos, we welcome your contributions—whether original papers, reviews, opinion pieces, or whatever. If your article stems from a meeting of one of the Society's Sections or Forums, it should be submitted to Professor Tim David, Proceedings Editor, *JRSM*, Booth Hall Children's Hospital, Blackley, Manchester M9 7AA (Tel/Fax: +44(0)161 740 6239; E-mail: tjd@netcomuk.co.uk); on the title page please indicate when and where the meeting took place. All other items should be sent to Dr Robin Fox, Editor, *JRSM*, PO Box 102, Crowborough TN6 3WB (Tel/Fax: +44(0)1892 853520; E-mail: RobinFox1@compuserve.com). The following paragraphs offer hints on preparing and submitting material to the *JRSM*. Both of us stand ready to help at every stage in the genesis of an article, from the gleam in the eye to the final proofs. Call us or write.

PRESENTATION AND SUBMISSION

Prepare your paper according to the 'Vancouver Style' (Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals. *N Engl J Med* 1997;**336**:309–15). We do not follow this exactly, but we will make the necessary adjustments. Take particular note of the passages on authorship, redundant publication, and ethics. Use generic names and SI units (with the usual exceptions such as blood pressure in mmHg and haemoglobin in g/dL). Send four copies of the text, double-spaced; we ask only two copies of glossy figures. Provide an e-mail address if you have one but please do not send full papers by e-mail.

The *covering letter* is important. To help the editors in their preliminary evaluation, please indicate why you think the paper suitable for the *JRSM*. We advise you to look at some recent issues, to see whether the subject has already been covered. If your paper should go on the fast track, let us know.

Be sure to supply the *signatures* of all authors, who should meet the criteria specified by the Vancouver Group (see above).

Declare any financial or other factors that might be perceived (by anyone) as a source of bias; funding should always be stated publicly, but *conflicts of interest* range from the serious to the trivial, and not all have to be aired in print—the editors will advise.

Another matter that may be debatable is *redundant publication*. If in doubt, give us the facts—about any overlap with other material in print or in press. You should also supply written *permission* to reproduce material from other publications and, where a patient might be identifiable, we need permission from that patient or his or her representatives.

Finally, indicate who is the *corresponding author* and where he or she can be contacted.

GUIDELINES ON LENGTH

If a paper is too long, too technical, or over-referenced but otherwise attractive, our response will be to negotiate rather than refuse. We refer you to the opening remarks about readability and brevity. The *JRSM* is not the place for great lists of references (for a full paper, 40 should suffice). Here are some lengths not to exceed, unless there is good reason:

Issues of the day — 3 pages
Review articles — 4 pages
Original articles — 4 pages
Historical reviews — 4 pages
Personal papers — 2 pages
Case reports — 1.25 pages
(not more than 6 references)

Letters — 0.3 page

To clarify your ideas on the purpose of a case report, read J P Vandenbroucke's 'Case reports in an evidence-based world'. *J R Soc Med* 1999; **92**:159–63

One page of undiluted text is about 1000 words, and you must then allow for headings, figures, tables and references.

EDITORIAL RESPONSES

For articles, but not letters, we acknowledge receipt. The editors do a preliminary screen to eliminate submissions that are clearly unsuitable; and the remaining science-based articles, either original or review, are sent for peer review. Some material, naturally, is published without external review—commissioned editorials and book reviews, and letters (which, when accepted, usually go into the next issue).

PROOFS AND OFFPRINTS

For most contributions, proofs will be despatched to the corresponding author before publication. Occasionally, with letters, there may not be time. When an article is published, 25 offprints are supplied free of charge and are despatched approximately 3 weeks after publication. An order form for additional offprints will have been sent with the proofs.